

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 06365 111822Z
ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 6365

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAGR, ELTN, CO
SUBJECT: US POLICY TOWARDS THE DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY

REF: BOGOTA 3568, STATE 117538, BOGOTA 5374, BOGOTA 5430, STATE 145786

1. WE BELIEVE THAT THE USG IS NOW FACED WITH TWO RATHER CLEAR CUT ALTERNATIVES--A) ATTEMPT TO FORCE A CHANGE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE AFTOSA PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA BY PRUSUING THE COURSE OF ACTION RECOMMENDED IN BOGOTA 3568 (STIMULATE THE AFTOSA PROGRAM BY MODIFYING OUR POLICY TO PERMIT SOME CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN AS SOON AS THE INJUNCTION IS LIFTED); OR B) BEGIN NOW TO NEGOTIATE THE TERMINATION OF THE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS COVERING AFTOSA CONTROL AND HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION. IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ' REACTIONS TO THE DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY PROGRAM AND THE DOWNGRADING OF THE COLOMBIAN AFTOSA PROGRAM RESULTING FROM THE REORGANIZATION OF THE COLOMBIAN AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE, THE GOC COULD BE RECEPTIVE TO TERMINATING THE AGREEMENTS NOW, IF WE WISH TO DO SO. A THIRD POSSIBLITY WOULD BE A COMBINATION OF (A) AND (B) IN THE SENSE OF FIRST PROPOSING ALTERNATIVE (A) TO THE GOC AND, IN THE EVENT THAT IT IS REJECTED, THEN PROPOSING TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENTS.

2. AS REGARDS (A) ABOVE, OUR THINKING IS THAT IF THE COURSE
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OF ACTION IS ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOC, THE NECESSARY CHANGES TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE AFTOSA PROGRAM WOULD HAVE TO BE IN PLACE BEFORE ANY CALL FOR BIDS ON CONTRUCTION OF HIGHWAY PROJECT ONE. CHANGES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE WILL PROBABLY REQUIRE AN AMENDMENT TO THE AFTOSA AGREEMENT.

3. IF CONCERNED WASHINGTON AGENCIES AGREE THAT WE SHOULD

PURSUE ALTERNATIVE (A), AND NSC APPROVAL IS FORTHCOMING, WE SUGGEST THAT THE GOC BE APPROACHED PRIOR TO THE AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 1 SRG/CG MEETINGS, SO THAT THE MATTER CAN BE DISCUSSED ON AN INFORMED BASIS BY BOTH SIDES AT THE MEETINGS THEMSELVES. OUR PROPOSED APPROACH WOULD BE FOR THE CHARGE TO DELIVER A DIPLOMATIC NOTE OUTLINING THE PLAN TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WITH SUBSEQUENT CALLS ON THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS, LEAVING COPIES OF THE NOTE WITH THEM.

4. WHETHER WE PROCEED TO SEEK A CHANGE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE AFTOSA PROGRAM, OR TAKE STEPS TO TERMINATE THE AFTOSA AND HIGHWAY AGREEMENTS, WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS IN OUR INTERESTS TO MOVE QUICKLY IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION BECOMING A PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ISSUE HERE OR, IN THE EVENT OF THE ELECTION OF JULIO CESAR TURBAY, A POTENTIAL STICKING POINT IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. (IN CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER EARLIER THIS YEAR, TURBAY MADE SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE DGH AS A POTENTIAL PROBLEM AREA IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS - BOGOTA 3568).

5. IF THE DECISION IS MADE TO MOVE AHEAD WITH ALTERNATIVE (A) REQUEST GUIDANCE ON WORDING FOR A DIPLOMATIC NOTE.
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